« How many…
The third voice »

The BETA Museum

BETA is the term used to describe a version of a website or software released to users for testing before it's official release.

Increasingly companies like Google are operating in a permanent state of Beta, as they use the constant feedback, which they receive from their users to constantly improve their service.

Social media is shifting other sectors towards operating in a constant state of BETA, as they open themselves up to a world of real time reviews, where the public share their experiences, good and bad of everything from the restaurant they ate in last night to their visit to your gallery today.

Museums have embraced social media as a tool to engage with their audiences, and I suspect that many have done this without realising that part of taking part in a conversation, is listening to what the other person has to say (or at the least management of most venues are unaware of this).

How can a museum really build a community around it's brand if the feedback which is given isn't used to continuously make the institution better.

I feel that to do this, we need to embrace BETA, and be brave enough to open ourselves up to a never ending cycle of development, one in which we partner with the public to create the museum of the future.

With the current climate of cut backs, it may seem like a crazy idea to promise continuous development to the public, after all it would be worse to promise something that you simply can't deliver then to do nothing at all.

However, I think that it is fair to be honest with the public about what is possible within your existing budget, and as partners, to work together to fundraise if there is a demand for something that is beyond the museum financially.

The fact is that the public are making statements about where they think you need to improve anyway, both publically on social networks and privately to friends and you can either ignore or act on this.

Share and Enjoy:

This entry was posted on Thursday, February 25th, 2010 at 10:01 am and is filed under Co-production. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

4 Responses to "The BETA Museum"

1.   @platipuszen says:
    February 25, 2010 at 10:37 am

    the topic is very interesting. I agree with you when you say that we have to 'be brave enough to open ourselves up to a never ending cycle of development'. You're speaking of museums, but I think we could say the same for other cultural organizations or events. I know better the world of film festivals and it has the same problems – cut backs, the building of a community around their work and so on. I believe that the key, for the future of the cultural institutions, is the

courage to listen to their public. In Italy this process is very slow because many people (politicians, above all) fail to see that world is changed and we also have to change our way to produce and spread culture. Sometimes, the cultural world is very conservative...

2. *Sarah B* says:
February 25, 2010 at 5:20 pm

Surely constant evaluation, assessment and change should be a part of our permenant commitment to improvement anyway? Research, do, evaluate, research and change, do, evaluate, research and change... The only change now is that the "research" comes not just from running statistics and the comments book, but from a more direct dialogue with our visitors. It's not a different process, just a better informed one.

I don't think it's ever a crazy idea to be constantly improving and developing. As you say, it's more about the expectation of visitors as to how much change they'll be seeing. But that's the benefit of a dialogue with visitors rather than a didactic approach – the chance to discuss with your visitors what's possible within your budget and time constraints and what's not.

3. *José* says:
March 1, 2010 at 11:55 am

Hello, in this web: http://www.spanishmuseums.com you can find information of a lot of museums in Spain.

4. *Going Mobile – Why Museums Should Develop Web Apps not iPhone Apps for their Target Audience* says:
March 2, 2010 at 10:55 am

[...] Niche Sites & Testing Ideas – Due to the fact that rollout time and cost can be kept to a minimum, as well as the fact that barriers to entry are low, it is super easy to create new content for specific exhibitions or tie ups that a museum does. Testing ideas is also a lot easy before full roll out, which ties in nicely with Jim Richardson's beta museum. [...]

Leave a Reply

Name (required)

Mail (will not be published) (required)

Website

Submit Comment

Hosted by HostMonster